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# Mediensprache und Medienkommunikation

im interdisziplinären und  
interkulturellen Vergleich

Mit einem einleitenden Beitrag  
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## **Socio-cultural differentiation in Kazakhstan political discourse**

One of the key values associated with social interaction is tolerance. The notion of a tolerant dialogue presupposes the use of a 'language of consent', as opposed to 'speech of hatred'. Tolerance, regarded as a lingua-culture-logical and lingua-pragmatic category, is seen as a type of verbal interaction, as opposed to verbal aggression. Linguists define the term 'speech of hatred' as "language and speech resources, including structuring principles, which generate negative stereotypes derived from mass consciousness, supported by the recipient's hostile attitude toward someone or something" (quoted according to Chepkina 2006). Most commentators agree that the degree of tolerance in a society depends on the nature and extent of the language of tolerance of that society.

Language serves as an instrument of social power. Discursive expression of any kind of power, including political, is manifested in a system of communication between different actors. The political sphere is one of the principal areas of communication. Researchers see the specific features of politics in its discursive nature: "Many political actions are by nature speech acts." If one assumes that "people enter into one or another discursive space, not only in a particular social role [...] but with certain objectives, then the intentional basis of political discourse is a power struggle" (Sheigal 2004, p. 16, 18). This pragmatic factor that distinguishes political discourse from a series of other institutional discourses, can be considered as a means of social interaction, but can also serve as a basis for social conflict. This conclusion proceeds logically from the very nature of political communication, the content of which consists of three major components: "the articulation of the political position (orientation), the search for and rallying of supporters (integration), the fight with the enemy (agonality)" (Sheigal 2004, p. 112).

Contradictions and conflicts arise in almost all spheres of human life, including the political sphere, and communication in politics is always biased, affective. However, researchers have noted an increased aggressiveness in modern political speech, with the active use of confrontational strategies and tactics in verbal behaviour. Relatedly, it is important to emphasise that the nature of political communication, in contrast to other types of institutional communica-

tion, lies in its orientation to a mass addressee. Indeed, it is as a result of the mass media, which act as an intermediary between the politicians and people, that political discourse exists at all, in its modern form. Yet most researchers agree that despite the common language that much mass communication shares, in most political discourse realised through the media, there is variation due to the heterogeneity of the subjects themselves, according to the orientation of their policies. Each subject group has its own political culture, based on its system of values and norms, although the ultimate goal of all participants in the political space is a struggle for power. In other words, it makes sense to talk about political sociolects or, in other words, the “socio-cultural version of socio-political speech” (Sheigal 2004, p. 237f.).

Kazakhstan's political discourse is represented by the socio-cultural variations of the party in power and the opposition, the discursive manifestation of which are the official and oppositional discourses. The presence of these variants, each with their own internal varieties, is explained by the fact that the political space consists of, according to Sheigal, ‘power politicians’ and ‘opposition ones’. There are particular reasons to talk in general about ‘politicians in opposition’ in Kazakhstan politics, because as recently as October 2009, leaders of two leading opposition parties in Kazakhstan, ‘Azat’ and PUSD, announced their merger: *Объединенная партия “станет мощной и действенной альтернативой партии власти”* (‘The newly combined party will become a powerful and effective alternative to the party in power’, *Svoboda Slova*, 15.10.2009). Each sociolect claims to be the mouthpiece of truth about the modern socio-political situation in the country. Arutyunova points out several utterances, all seemingly intended to be truth-bearing, where the meanings are in fact relative, dependent on the addressee: “true candour, personally perceived truth), objective truth” (Arutyunova 1999, p. 598). Following this terminology, we can say that “objective truth” describes more characteristics of oppositional discourse. The realm of ‘truthful directness’ does not only include facts but also opinions and evaluations which can be clearly seen in the discourse of the opposition.

In the verbal behaviour of representatives of relevant sociolects, the thematic structure of the discourses is determined by the system of values and norms inherent in the social group. There is no doubt that in political communication the connection of the language with the basic cultural opposition ‘friend or foe’ is most clearly realised. All other values derive from this opposition. As can be seen in our time, especially in times of crisis, the actualisation of this opposition does not allow speaking about harmonisation of relations in our society. In the modern discursive political space, a particular form of the ideological cate-

gory of tolerance, namely tolerance of 'us' and the rejection of 'foreigners', is clearly displayed. In describing 'our circle', as a rule, any differences in the attitudes, approaches, or points of view of its participants are erased. This approach is seen universally, so that expressions of tolerance or intolerance always relate to this paradigm. Connected to this, generally speaking the verbal organisation of the propositional content of various types of information, the choice of presuppositions, the selection of certain words, phrases, or grammatical forms, are identified by linguists as instruments of 'hidden power'.

This problem fits into the context of a more general problem: the relationship between language of power and the power of language. On the one hand, "language becomes power only when it is used by people in power; language itself has no power" (Vodak 1997, p. 19). In this connection, reference may be made to the opinion of R. Blakar that whoever wields the highest authority may decide at any given time whether current linguistic usage is appropriate or not, therefore, whoever has the power to a large extent determines the use and meaning of the language ('power tools', in Blakar 1987, p. 113). Thus, in official discourse a few years ago, the noun phrase *'управляемая демократия'* ('managed democracy') became widespread and was introduced into Kazakhstan's everyday political life by President Nazarbayev. In oppositional discourse, this connotation of a scale of democratic values appears in an opposing sense: *Эти слова свидетельствуют, что 'управляемая демократия' по казахстанскому варианту достигла своей высшей стадии* ('These words confirm that the Kazakhstani version of a 'managed democracy' has reached its peak.') (*Respublika*). Another example concerns the initiation of a construction metaphor in the discussion of international economics: *наша страна готова активно участвовать [...] в формировании новой мировой архитектуры; Казахстан всегда был и остается площадкой для диалога* ('our country is ready to actively participate in forming a new world architecture; Kazakhstan has always been and remains a platform for dialogue'). Used in the address of the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev, to the participants of VIII Media Forum, it was immediately seized by the forum and activated in their speeches: *активно работать над выстраиванием архитектуры будущей мировой финансовой системы; Такое неординарное видение строительства посткризисного мира; атмосфера Алмаатинской диалоговой площадки; эффективность диалоговой площадки* ('to work hard at creating the architecture of a future world financial system; such an unusual vision of building a post-crisis world; the atmosphere of the Almaty dialogue platform; the effectiveness of a platform for dialogue', *Kazpravda* 107-108, 2009).

On the other hand, the language itself provides a whole arsenal of potential expressions of the exercise of power. Political communication demonstrates how certain features of language are deliberately activated in order to influence mass and individual consciousness and behaviour. It is common for both the official and oppositional types of political communication speech acts 'to tell the truth'. However, both types of discourse are characterised by the substitution of opinion for fact. The field of opinions is characterised by discursive features that lack clear boundaries, such as evaluations, assumptions, predictions, beliefs and attitudes. In the media texts analysed for this study they appear in most cases in the form of evaluative opinions or assumptions. These features can be seen in terms of the framework of ideological modality, which, according to T.G. Dobrosklonskaya, "reveals that such evaluations are most often founded on political opinions and ideological values" (Dobrosklonskaya 2009, p. 86).

This is demonstrated if we look in detail at some of the remarks of the official and oppositional discourses: (1) *Казахстан сумел грамотно распорядиться средствами* ('Kazakhstan used the resources competently'). (2) *Казахстан всегда был и остается площадкой для диалога* ('Kazakhstan has always been and remains a platform for dialogue'). (3) *Несомненно, этому помогают личные контакты между главами двух государств* ('Undoubtedly personal contacts between the leaders of the two states contribute to it', *Kazpravda* 107-108, 2009). (4) *Наша власть не выдерживает проверку кризисом* ('Our power is not borne out by the crisis', *Svoboda Slova* 19, 2009). (5) *Все возможности, имевшиеся у этого режима, уже исчерпаны* ('All options available to this regime have already been exhausted'). (6) *Мы уверены, что ряды объединенной партии будут* ('We are sure the rows of the united party will be', *Svoboda Slova* 38, 2009). In (1), (2), (4) and (5), an evaluative opinion is expressed, as also in (3) and (6) but with a higher degree of confidence, as seen in the use of the high probability modality of 'undoubtedly' and 'sure'. The opinion score for both sociolects suggests that they assert subjective truth. If the views expressed were explicitly acknowledged as personal experience, or if a source of evidence for the claims were cited, matters might be improved. However, the authors consider it unnecessary: they consider their propositions to be true. The modality of opinion in political discourse, as Matveyev rightly asserts, should be understood not as a category statement, but as illocutionary modality, i.e. as a means of expressing the author's intentions (Matveyev 2002).

It is important to mention the special role of noun phrases in the creation of necessity modality for certain subject groups in the discourse: the manipulation of NPs demonstrates just as strongly as previous examples the power of

language to impose a subjective outlook. Nominal choices can indicate author values. Thus, in the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan's speech at the XII session of the People's Assembly of Kazakhstan, it is not a random selection of evaluative words that attracts one's attention, but rather the following NPs: *надежный/прочный фундамент, конструктивное решение, весомый вклад, уникальный опыт, впечатляющий успех, самый высокий в СНГ, мощный экономический подъем, грамотная/взвешенная политика, взвешенное и мудрое поведение, самый либеральный язык* ('a reliable, steady foundation', 'a constructive decision', 'significant contribution', 'a unique experience', 'impressive success', 'the highest in the CIS', 'powerful increase in economic development', 'competent/weighty policy', 'weighty and wise conduct', 'the most liberal language') As we can see, the opinion-score in this case is based not so much on the traditional 'good-bad' axis, but taking into consideration such arguments as 'the primary-secondary'.

Both the official and oppositional discourses employ the lexical set of corporate affairs. Political actors, regardless of their party group membership, make use of such key words and phrases as *власть, политика, демократия, стабильность, единство, прогресс, интересы государства, простой народ, в интересах народа* etc. ('power', 'policy', 'democracy', 'stability', 'unity', 'progress', 'the interests of the state', 'ordinary people', 'in the people's interests', etc.), and recently the word *кризис* (crisis) has been added to this list. The differences between variants of socio-political speech lie in the connotative characteristics of the same tokens, and in their syntagmatic relations. In this respect, the term 'ideological polysemy', introduced by linguists to describe a situation where the same words are in use by representatives of different ideologies, proves to be very apt for indicating the different concepts referred to by the same tokens. "Ideological polysemy is the result of a group of connotations, expressing interpretations of political reality from the standpoint of different social groups." (Sheigal 2004, p. 51).

All the keywords in use in political discourse are in opposition to connotative labelling, which is confirmed by the analysis and word-ideology. Thus, in official discourse – *стабильность* (stability) is one of the key words. – *Это наше главное завоевание, это наше Все. Казахстан является лидером развития и гарантом стабильности в Центральной Азии.* ('This is our main gain; it is all ours. Kazakhstan is leading regional development and a guarantee of stability in Central Asia'.) In the discourse of the opposition, we find instead *дестабилизация* ('destabilization'). Или *стабильность коррупции, стабильность бедности, всепоглощающая стабильность* ('corrupt stability', 'the stability of power', 'overwhelming stability'). Though such

statements do not belong to the specialised verbal signs of integration, they do invite that association, that is, identify themselves with a certain audience, appealing to the feelings and mood of a particular social group. Many linguists emphasise common language acts as a powerful means of creating group solidarity.

The contexts of such key words as ‘democracy’ have positive connotations in the official discourse: *Казахстан продолжает движение по пути демократии, продвижение демократии, сильное демократическое государство, демократия – это ‘диктатура закона’* (‘Kazakhstan is continuing its progress towards democracy’, ‘democratic advance’, ‘a strong democratic state’, ‘democracy is ‘the dictatorship of law’’). The subjects of oppositional discourse speak of *эрсатз-демократии* (‘ersatz-democracy’). They perceive ‘democracy’ as *средство камуфляжа, as ширму, одно из средств маскировки истинных намерений* (‘a means of camouflage’; ‘a screen’, ‘a means of concealing true intentions’, *Svoboda Slova*). The conclusion reached by oppositional forces on the topic of democracy is: *читайте и думайте, нужна ли нам такая демократия* (‘read and think: ask yourself whether we need such democracy’). The addressees are invited to draw their own conclusion (*читайте и думайте*) (‘read and think’), but according to the author, the conclusion must be unambiguous: *такая – не нужна* (‘it is not necessary’). The addresser uses symbols and signs of integration and otherness: the token *нам* opposed by the deictic *такая* (‘such’), creates a distancing effect. At the same time, the oppositional sociolect has positioned itself as *объединенная демократическая оппозиция, здоровые силы* (‘united democratic opposition’, ‘healthy forces’). So we can see that commitment to democracy is expressed in a variety of ways in different discourse types.

According to Sheigal's definition, connotatively loaded signs may serve as political indicators, functioning as passwords, demonstrating commitment to a particular ideology (Sheigal 2004, p. 106-108).

*Власть* (‘power’) belongs to the basic set of concepts within political discourse. *Власть* (‘power’) becomes the object of reflection; it is subjected to reflection, interpretation and criticism; one can speak about it abstractly and generally, as well as concretely, specifically, as in ‘those who hold authority’. But this concept is undergoing semantic expansion, through the inclusion of associated ideas, and it seems that native speakers respond primarily to the associative semantic elements in the term. These elements appear in synonymous and compatible terms, cliches, and new, imaginative formulations. In a similar way to ‘democracy’, discussed above, observations show that the high frequency use of this term has different semantic values in oppositional discourse,



which is understandable. Power is always a relationship between actors: those who have it, and those who do not. Therefore, the subject of power, its real owner, seeks to preserve it, but the object can either be a supporter of it, or he or she may be in opposition to the government. In the discourse of the opposition, oppositional values are clearly expressed: *власть – народ, общество: Если бы тогда эта идея была принята обществом и властью [...]* ('Power is people, society. If that idea had been accepted by the society and those in power at that time [...]', *Svoboda Slova* 11, 2009). The combinatorics of the tokens in the opposition discourse testify to its ideological purpose, displaying an absence of positive assessment: *прямое порождение власти, беспредел власти, разборки во власти, продукты власти, Власть является инструментом для реализации своих идей, амбиций и даже корыстных интересов. Они пришли в город, а нарвались на баррикады власти* ('a direct outcome of power'; 'the lawlessness of power'; 'power struggles'; 'the fruits of power'. 'Power is a means of realising ideas, ambitions and even selfish interests'. 'They came to town but were stopped by the barricades of power'). It becomes clear that 'power' can refer to political domination, to the organs that sustain it, and also to specific representatives of political power. Only in the discourse of the opposition is the word *режим* applied as a synonym for *власть* ('power') in full accordance with its dictionary definition as 'the system of government, usually of an anti-national, anti-democratic nature', Ozhegov/Shvedova 2003, p. 673). *Тот режим, который мы сейчас критикуем, уже состоялся как система. Все возможности, имевшиеся у этого режима, уже исчерпаны. [...] Почему режим боится этих выборов?* ('The regime we are criticising has established itself as a system. All the regime's options have been exhausted. Why is the regime afraid of these elections?', *Svoboda Slova* 38, 2009). The ideological connotations of this token are indicated by its compatibility with the following: *авторитарный, антинародный, семейно-клановый* ('authoritarian', 'anti-national', and 'family-clan').

In both the discourse of the party in power and that of the opposition, such conceptual metaphorical means of manipulating people's consciousness are widely used. This kind of use of metaphor is a vivid example of covert advocacy of certain ideas, and the transition to a veiled manipulation of mass consciousness. The property of 'imposing' a specific view of the world on a certain language speaker, inviting them to perceive reality from a certain perspective, is attributable to the metaphor. Different political sociolects use different metaphors. In opposition discourse the development of metaphorical models with conceptual images of '*войны*', '*криминального мира*', '*болезни*', '*театра*' ('war', 'criminal world', 'diseases' and 'theatre') is seen. The concept *война* ('war') is developed by association with *информационная* ('information'). In



this situation criminal and military metaphors are combined, with the following occurring in one linguistic instance: *информационное оружие, информационная бомба, информационная блокада, информационный киллер, телекиллер, информационные стволы* ('information weapon', 'information bomb', 'information blockade', 'information killer', 'TV killer', 'information guns'). After well-known events, the image of *майдан* ('square') was introduced into the discursive space of Kazakhstan's media, and was used by politicians in the metaphorical sense as confrontation (between the government and opposition). This metaphor is closely related to the *милитарной* ('military') model: *Неизвестно, ждет ли площади Алма-Аты и Астаны судьба киевского майдана?* ('It is unknown whether the squares in Astana and Almaty will follow the fate of Kiev square', *Juma-Times*). In the discourse of the Kazakhstan Media, a new conceptual image has begun to be used with both the literal Kazakh meaning of the word, and its connotative sense, *майдан*: *Если власть мирится со своими недостатками, не может их исправить или не хочет, тогда – майдан. В Украине это – 'площадь', а в наших широтах – обязательно 'фронт'. Поэтому доводить страну до майдана не надо* ('If the ruling powers persist in their shortcomings, fail to correct them or do not wish to do so, then it means: square. In the Ukraine it is 'square', but there it is bound to be a 'front'. That's why we shouldn't lead the country to it', *AIF-Kazakhstan*).

In the discourse of power, we frequently see personifying metaphors reworking the conceptual image of *движение, развитие, рост* ('movement', 'development', 'growth'). It turned out to be paired with the conceptual image of *дорога, путь, транспорт* ('roads', 'streets', 'transport'). The opposite use of this metaphorical model, presented in opposition media, is *казахстанское бездорожье* ('roadless Kazakhstan'). There is a strikingly prominent use of metaphors with the same conceptual meaning, and describing the same events, but with different evaluative connotations embodied in them. Thus, the 'mechanistic' metaphor: *государство – это механизм* ('a state is a mechanism'), one of the basic 'centennial' metaphors, can be filled with either positive or negative content, depending on the author's position. In the opposition media, for example, the following metaphorical image was used: *разбитая машина, передние колеса которой проколоты* ('a broken car, the front wheels of which are punctured').

Modern cognitive science has moved from the consideration of individual metaphors to the study of metaphorical patterns, i.e. their compatibility. An important feature of conceptual metaphor is its "ability to be developed in the text" (Chudinov 2004, p. 177). Thus, in the opposition discourse (see, for example:

*Svoboda Slova*, 11.05.2006) the relationship between government and opposition is presented figuratively with the dominance of one, or often two or three, metaphorical models: *meamp* ('theatre') and a criminal metaphor. These metaphors, along with the basic concept of the political discourse *власть* ('power'), serve as a means of communication of the parts of the text and ensure the integrity of its perception: *беспредел власти; острые разборки во власти, дележ и передел каналов; расправа с политиками* ('criminality of power', 'fierce power struggles', 'division and remake of channels', 'harsh punishment with politicians'). In accordance with another dominant metaphorical model, the behaviour of the authorities toward the opposition is represented by developed metaphors: *сценарий подавления оппозиции, политический триллер, заказной фарс, герой этого фарса, зрители политического триллера, роли все расписаны* ('political thriller', 'home-made farce', 'the hero of this farce', 'the spectators of a political thriller', 'the parts are distributed'). As we can see, political life is metaphorically characterised as performing art of one kind or another, with a suggestion of performance genres varying according to the different parties; actors, performers, and their roles are also mentioned.

Another type of feature, involving quotations, allusions, and other references to specific pre-existing texts, can also be seen, and can also be considered as a distinguishing characteristic of political sociolects: *Слепила из того, что было* ('made by sticking together what was at my disposal', from 'On the President's Address', *Svoboda Slova*). *Центризберком работает под чутким руководством Администрации президента* ('The Central Committee is working under the enthusiastic leadership of the President's administration', *Respublica*). *Время боится пирамид* ('Time is afraid of pyramids': In Astana the Centre of World Religions is in a pyramid-shaped building) – *Религиозная лошадка, пожалуй, будет порезвее обсеинного слона* ('a religious horse is likely to be more playful than an OSCE elephant', *Respublica*) [...] *недавняя хозяйка медиа-горы. Тайны акординского двора* ('the recent hostess of media-hill. The secrets of Ak-Orda Court', *Svoboda Slova*).

It is well known that artifacts may appear as political symbols. In the discourse of the opposition, artifacts are often used according to the principle of contrast: *Левобережье Астаны* ('The Left Bank of Astana'), *Ак Орда и алмаатинский 'Шанырак'* ('Ak-Orda' and Almaty 'Shanyrak'). *Там – блеск президентского дворца, зданий парламента, банков, министерств, здесь – люди на грани выживания, без газа, тепла и света* ('Over there is the splendour of the Presidential Palace, Parliament buildings, Banks and Ministries – here, people surviving, without gas, heating or energy', *Svoboda Slova*).

In this example, the signifiers relate to deictic orientation, suggesting ‘home group’ and ‘other’ in the ‘here/there’ polarity. They help to identify friends and foes. The NPs – *Левобережье Астаны, Ак Орда, Шанырак* (*The Left Bank, Ak-Orda, Shanyrak*) – are mediated symbols of power and people, that is, the place itself becomes a symbol as well as its literal designation. The isolation from its referents is suggested in the use of this symbol, in the title of the article devoted to events in Copenhagen: *Шанырак по-датски* (Danish Shanyrak, *Svoboda Slova* 9/2007). These artifacts act as passwords, reflecting the most significant power symbols of official and opposition sociolects.

This kind of ambiguity is characteristic of signifiers used in political language, leading to increased options for interpretation. “Nominative accuracy as a property of a special sublanguage of the language policy is suppressed due to its pragmatic semantic uncertainty” (Sheigal 2004, p. 49). In political discourse, regardless of its ideological orientation, such methods as the obscuring of a certain position or opinion, the deliberate concealment of the truth, deliberate misleading, and the removal of liability for reports, all lead to semantic uncertainty. Many cases can be accounted for in primarily pragmatic terms, principal among these being the manipulation of public consciousness.

The ambiguity caused by language operating on different levels, results in inaccuracies in its reception, and the lack of clarity leads to the failure of the message to convey information. This can be seen, for example, in the following: *Говорят, что Вы и N укрылись в каком-то бункере, вооруженные до зубов. Прятались где-то в посольстве за границей* (‘You and N. are said to have hidden in a bunker, armed to the teeth. Hid somewhere in an embassy abroad’, *Svoboda Slova* 31/2009). *Они все больше развивают ‘в обществе баррикадное мышление’, когда кто-то должен противостоять кому-то* (‘More and more the society is developing ‘a barricade mentality’, where people must always be opposed to each other’, *ORT* 02.03.2009). *Но нам тоже нужно обращать не к тому, что какие-то вещи он делал правильно, а какие-то неправильно, а что-то вообще сделано очень плохо.* (‘But we also need to focus on the fact that something was done badly, rather than that he did something right or wrong’, *Svoboda Slova* 31/2009). *Кто-то, наверное, остался с этим убеждением, а кто-то, наоборот, нашел какие-то плюсы в том, что я могу добавить [...]* (Someone is certain to be convinced by it, and on the other hand, someone else will find advantages in my point of view’, *Vremya* 81/2009). The uncertainty arises mostly because of the desire to avoid semantic accuracy, and not because of the author's lack of relevant information. This attitude is typical for all political actors.

We can see therefore that ideological orientation, which is the basis of political sociolect, determines its linguistic characteristics. The distinctive features of different variants of political speech discussed here are all based on oppositional political discourse: 'свой-чужой' ('self -other') and belong to universal features of political discourse.

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